

News Release

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

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A. G. Kawamura, Secretary
Arnold Schwarzenegger, Governor

CDFA Secretary Kawamura Tells of Preparations for H5N1 Bird Flu in California



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LOS ANGELES, March 30, 2006, Thursday, March 30, 2006 - Speaking at Governor Schwarzenegger's Pandemic Flu Summit today in Los Angeles, CDFA Secretary A.G. Kawamura spoke of the agency's recent experience fighting a dangerous bird disease and discussed widespread testing of birds in California as part of CDFA's preparation for the possible arrival of H5N1 bird flu.

"In 2002, exotic Newcastle disease (END) was detected in California, a highly contagious and fatal bird illness," said Secretary Kawamura. "Working with our partner state agencies and the USDA, we were able to eradicate the disease in 11 months, a much shorter time than projections. The exotic Newcastle disease is similar in many ways to what we would expect with a bird flu outbreak, and our response plan is virtually identical."

CDFA established a statewide quarantine for END in 2002-2003, and eradication costs totaled \$151 million. More than 3 million birds were euthanized.

After END was eradicated, CDFA and the USDA left an avian health unit in place to distribute biosecurity information to bird owners and also to test birds around the state for illnesses such as bird flu. Last year, more than 100,000 birds were tested.

"We are testing live birds at places where they are sold," said Secretary Kawamura. "Test results are known quickly enough that we believe we can detect a bird flu outbreak rapidly. And that is critical if we are to eradicate the disease quickly."

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The California Department of Food and Agriculture protects and promotes California's \$31.8 billion agricultural industry. California's farmers and ranchers produce a safe, secure supply of food, fiber and shelter; marketed fairly for all Californians; and produced with responsible environmental stewardship.

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